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Report of the

INTERDEPARTMENTAL RELATIONS AND LAND CONSERVATION DIVISION

n,	B. Sc., M. Ag., P. Ag.,	Director
D. G. Harrington,	B. Sc., P. Ag.,	Associate Director
A. F. Belyea,	B. Sc., M. Sc., P. Ag.,	Executive Coordinator
C. D. Drabble,	B. Sc., P. Eng.,	Executive Liaison Officer
G. P. Hartman,	B. Sc., P. Ag., P. Eng.,	Land Conservation Administrator
D. B. Patterson,	B. Sc., B. Sc. Agr.,	Land Conservation Coordinator
K. R. Smith,	B. Comm.,	Research Assistant

1. Divisional Purpose and Philosophy

Land, when viewed in its broader context, provides the basis for the environment. Land provides the base for natural resource, regardless of whether one considers the minerals under the land surface; whether one considers the water, flora, and fauna on the land surface; or whether one considers the air above the land surface. When viewed in this context, land is the environmental base. Traditionally, land has not been viewed in its broader context as the environmental base, but rather as one divisible and discrete component of the environment. This narrower concept has been reflected in a fragmented approach to the administration of land and its natural resources.

At present numerous provincial statutes administered by several government departments and agencies regulate a broad range of land surface disturbances. In many instances these regulatory features have not been adequately related to each other and to land as the environmental base, and in some cases these regulatory features are inconsistent with each other. Rather than reflecting a concept of land as the environmental base, these regulatory features often reflect the highly specific views of the administrative agencies and their relationships with their clientele.

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The Interdepartmental Relations and Land Conservation Division has been established in response to this present situation. It is founded on the principle that land must be viewed as the environmental base and that weaknesses in the current system may be overcome through a coordinated, multiple-agency, and multiple-discipline approach to the administration of land and its natural resources.

The Division has been active during the past year in the preparation of policy and supporting legislation which have been designed to consolidate the authority presently given in numerous provincial statutes into a single land policy-setting statute. It has been designed to be the omnibus legislation which will guide specific resource administration. Administrative responsibility will be clearly defined and delegated either by statute or Order-in-Council to that administrative agency which has the demonstrated experience and staff capability with respect to specific forms of land surface disturbance. Inherent in this land conservation policy is the principle of coordination. The legislation will coordinate policy, legislation, and regulations among the numerous agencies responsible for various land administration programs.

2. Organizational Changes

During the year several organizational changes were made to strengthen the Department's land surface conservation capability and to prepare for the implementation of new land surface conservation policy and supporting legislation. On March 1, 1972 the administration of The Surface Reclamation Act, and the staff of the Surface Reclamation Council, were transferred by Order-in-Council from the Department of Mines and Minerals to this Division. On May 8, 1972 the staff of the Land Development Branch, formerly of the Water Resources Division, were transferred to this Division. These two transfers consolidated land surface conservation expertise and capability

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within the Division. Subsequent to these changes, the Department was reorganized and the Division changed its name to become the Interdepartmental Relations and Land Conservation Division. The Division name reflects the heavy emphasis on land management and conservation as well as the interdepartmental relationships required to adequately integrate the environmental land criteria and standards with other government agencies.

3. Interdepartmental Activities

3.1 Programs

Land Assembly Program. The Department of the Environment Act authorizes the acquisition of land for the purpose of any program or development project relating to the conservation, utilization or management of natural resources. The land assembly program implements this provision and operates on an interdepartmental basis. Various government departments requested the purchase of lands for government projects, such as provincial parks, reservoirs and dams, reforestation, grazing reserves, and others. Several special purchases were made during the year. Tax recovery lands comprising 43,820 acres and costing $390,983.00 were purchased for alternate use. Lands were also acquired in connection with Dinosaur and Moose Lake Provincial Parks. An ecological study area comprising 320 acres was purchased near Spruce Grove. The J. P. Austin Ranch, comprising 1,280 acres 12 miles west of Cochrane, was purchased for future recreational development for $201,600.00. Lands acquired through the land assembly program are usually under the administration of the Minister of Lands and Forests. The accompanying table shows land purchased for alternate late use and resource adjustment:

LAND ASSEMBLY

Purpose of Purchase	No. of Parcels	Acreage	Cost
Grazing Reserve Assembly	59	8,984.01	$ 145,374.51
Forestry Assembly	1	161.00	8,850.00
Watershed Conservation	54	1,375.56	247,189.85
Recreation Assembly	12	1,569.32	122,593.25
Wildlife Conservation	2	240.00	7,800.00
Multiple Use Conservation	291	44,444.25	434,808.00
Alternate Allocation	18	2,460.30	102,770.00
Totals	437	59,234.44	$ 1,069,385.61

Canada Land Inventory Program. The mapping of land capability in the settled portions of the Province of Alberta has been completed. The Canada Land Inventory was a comprehensive survey of land capability and use, designed to provide a basis for resource and land use planning. The Inventory covers the settled portions of rural Canada, and within the settled portions of rural Alberta, the Inventory includes assessment of how suitable the land is for agriculture, forestry, recreation, wildlife, sportfish, and present land use. Undertaken as a federal-provincial program under the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act (ARDA), the inventory has been federally financed since 1963, and operated by Alberta's natural resource agencies. All Canada Land Inventory maps are either completed or are in an advanced stage of production and will be released periodically over the next 18 months.

Under the Canada Land Inventory Pilot Land Use Planning Project an agreement was reached in 1970 between the province of Alberta and the Government of Canada to carry out a pilot land use planning study in the southern foothills region. During the year the Foothills Resource

Allocation Study continued to progress and preliminary reports were available on the Kananaskis-Spray Drainage Basin. The Study is sponsored by the interdepartmental Conservation and Utilization Committee, financed through the Canada Land Inventory Program, and is being carried out by the Department of Lands and Forests. It is scheduled to terminate in 1973.

A modified inventory of land capability was initiated during the year for the Ft. McMurray-Athabasca Tar Sands area. The project was initiated in this relatively unsettled portion of the province due to the acute lack of environmental base line data required to assess the potential environmental impact of tar sands development. The project is to be completed early in 1973.

Interdepartmental Application Referral Program. In order to provide for and ensure balanced study and coordinated government action in connection with natural resource development and environmental matters, multiple-agency, multiple-discipline application referral procedures have been established. These procedures were designed to obtain maximum knowledge about different proposals requiring government approval. The result has been more effective operational conditions which minimize the deleterious effects on the environment of porposals requiring government approval.

Subdivision Applications. The Division established conditions designed to protect watershed values and water bodies on 230 subdivision applications submitted to the Department by the Provincial Planning Branch and Regional Planning Commissions.

Pipe Line Applications. The Energy Resources Conservation Board referred 319 pipe line applications to the Division to obtain Department approval of the applications as they affect matters pertaining to the environment. These applications were referred to the other appropriate Divisions of the Department for their approval of environmental implications of the proposals.

Surface Lease Applications. Applications for approval of 243 surface leases on public lands, including 33 coal exploration proposals, were referred to the Division for approval of environmental implications, especially those relating to land surface conservation and watershed protection.

Crown Mineral Sales. The Division reviewed the environmental and particularly the watershed implications of 634 schedules of proposed Crown mineral sales, which comprised over 9,000,000 acres of land.

Man and Resources Conference Program. The concept of a conference to promote an understanding of the relationship between man and his environment originated in 1968 with the Intergovernmental Advisory Committee on Outdoor Recreation and the Coordinating Committee of the Canadian Council of Resource Ministers. The Council Ministers supported this concept at their 7th Annual General Meeting in October 1968 at Halifax. In February 1969, an Intergovernmental National Steering Committee was appointed to make specific recommendations concerning the nature and content of the conference program. The Steering Committee, on which this Division has representation, recommended that this conference should deal with current and emergent social and economic conflicts in renewable resources management. The Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers accepted these recommendations during their 9th Annual General Meeting in May 1970 at Fredericton and

emphasized the need for public participation throughout the conference program.

The principle objective of the Man and Resources Conference Program is to provide a national forum for debate concerning the formulation and recommendations of guidelines to achieve and sustain an optimum balance of social and economic benefits derived from the natural resources base. The program is based upon the need for the opinions of large numbers of people about the concerns of Canadians on the topic of natural resources. The Conference Program is being implemented over a period of one and a half years. The Program has been scheduled in two phases: (1) priority problem identification and (2) the development of solutions and recommendations for presentation at the 1973 Conference of the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers.

During 1972, this Division designed and coordinated the implementation of a public participation program for the purpose of identifying priority resource problems in Alberta. This public participation program involved over 1000 interested Albertans through a series of workshops held at the local, regional and provincial levels. At each workshop participant (1) consolidated and clarified issues in order to define resource use problems, (2) ranked problems identified in order of priority, and (3) selected representations for the next level workshop. A national level workshop was held in Montebello, Quebec from October 31, to November 4, 1972. Nine delegates elected at the Alberta Provincial workshops attended the national workshop. Participants at the national workshop identified 12 principle areas of concern, including citizen participation, population, the growth ethic and social values, education, qualitative and quantative data, long term planning and resource development, environmental

protection, northern development, integrated planning and coordination, foreign ownership, resource ownership, and energy development. The identifiaction of these 12 principle areas of concern brought phase one of the Conference Program to an end. Planning for phase two of the program (solutions and recommendations) has also been completed.

3.2 Interdepartmental Committees

An essential part of the Divisions activities relate to coordinating efforts associated with various interdepartmental committees. The Division was associated with the following interdepartmental committees during the year, in either a managing or contributing capacity.

Conservation and Utilization Committee - The Division provided the Chairmanship and secretariat services associated with this key interdepartmental committee at the Director level. The Committee inquires into matters pertaining to the environment and has representation from a wide spectrum of interests, including earth sciences, law, water resources, pollution control, industrial health, highway planning, lands, fish and wildlife, forestry, parks, minerals, municipal affairs, energy development and tourism. The Committee met 17 times during the year, including 5 special meetings.

Natural Resources Coordinating Council - The Division provided the secretariat services required for this interdepartmental coordinating committee which functions at the deputy minister level on matters pertaining to the environment. The Council met 10 times during the year and reviewed government policies, programs, services and administrative procedures on matters pertaining to the environment.

Land Use Assignment Committee - The Division provided representatives on behalf of the Department for this interdepartmental committee. The Committee met 20 times during the year for the purpose of resolving land use conflicts on public lands. Chairmanship for the Committee is provided by the Department of Lands and Forests. A major achievement of the Department's representative has been the establishment of an environment land use designation for the purpose of environmental protection. The Committee completed studies of the MacKay and Clear Hills areas during the year. Details of the Committees activities are reported in the Department of Lands and Forests annual report.

Alberta Recreation Committee - Departmental representation on this interdepartmental committee was provided through this Division. The Alberta Recreation Committee was active throughout the year in developing a policy position paper on recreation.

Continuing Committee for the Coordination of Statistics and Research - The Division provided representation on this Committee on behalf of the Department. This Committee held its first five meetings this year. Progress has been made in organizing the Committee for action, specifically the Committee has established the following four subcommittees: (1) Sub-Committee on Duplication of Statistical Effort, (2) Sub-Committee on Duplication of Research Effort, (3) Sub-Committee on Information Systems, and (4) Sub-Committee on Socio-Economic Indicators. Terms of reference for these subcommittees have been established and they are now operational. The Committee has representation from all government departments, with meetings of the Committee-as-a-whole once each month. The Department of Industry and Commerce provides the secretariat services for the Committee.

Mineral Sales Referral Committee - This Committee is a standing sub-committee of the Conservation and Utilization Committee. It is a key interdepartmental resource allocational referral committee which reviewed proposed Crown mineral sales within the borders of Alberta. In addition to reviewing 634 schedules which included more than 9,000,000 acres of land, the Committee also developed a new set of terms of reference and operational guidelines during the year. The Division provides the chairman for this committee.

Reclamation and Development Committee - The purpose of this interdepartmental committee is to review major coal development proposals involving Crown land. During the year seven strip mining operations on Crown lands were reviewed by this Committee, with the Division providing expertise on land surface conservation and reclamation issues.

3.3 Special Projects

Interdepartmenal Land Seminar - At the request of the Minister of the Environment, the Division coordinated and managed an interdepartmental land seminar held in February for the purpose of exploring the inter-departmental relationships in land management. The seminar was attended by over 120 civil servants whose responsibilities have a bearing on land administration within Alberta. Topics discussed at the seminar included: (1) land programs and their interdepartmental relationships, (2) public land allocation and development, (3) timber allocation and development, (4) water allocation and development, (5) mineral allocation and development, (6) land use controls and restrictions, (7) land use planning, (8) the role and relationship of regional planning commissions to government planning agencies, and (9) land surface mining. Considerable effort was involved in the preparation of an inventory of the 97 provincial programs and services related to land administration for the seminar participants.

Environmental Impact Statements - An Environmental Impact Statement for Primary Highway No. 40 was prepared by the Division and subsequently tabled in the Legislature by the Minister. The report was prepared on an interdepartmental basis through joint consultations with the Department of Lands and Forests and the Department of Highways and Transport. This was the first impact statement prepared by the Department and provided an opportunity to gain valuable experience in its preparation.

Watershed Protection - The Division continued to develop watershed protection maps and summary reports for input into land use studies. Watershed protection maps and summary reports were completed for the final 15 of the 19 sub-basins of the Foothills Resource Allocation Study. Watershed protection maps and summary reports were also completed for the entire area within the Battle River Regional Planning Commission boundary. The first of six reports on Lesser Slave Lake Study zones was prepared for the Provincial Planning Branch while the preliminary work was completed on two other study zones. These reports include watershed protection mapping, groundwater information, and details of watershed protection problems encountered in the study area. The watershed protection component of the Land Use Assignment Committee study of the Sturgeon Lake area was partially completed. This report will include a watershed protection mapping and summary report, groundwater mapping and data, and a report on climatic conditions within the Spring Creek Basin.

Interdepartmental Roles Documents - The Division coordinated the development of interdepartmental roles documents for the Department on matters pertaining to the environment. Considerable discussion took place in clarifying the basic principles involved and these

principles provided the basis for the development of roles documents in areas of interdepartmental interdependence. A roles document on environmental management and pollution control for gas processing operations between the Department of the Environment and the Energy Resources Conservation Board was finalized on December 20, 1972. This is the first of several to be developed between the Department and the Board.

National Parks Position Statement - In connection with the Village Lake Louise proposal, the Division prepared a position paper on development within National Parks located in Alberta. The position paper stressed the need for joint Federal-Provincial consultation on proposed developments within National Parks and emphasized the need for adequate environmental impact assessment of any development proposal within National Park boundaries. This position statement, along with others prepared by other government departments, provided a basis for deliberations on the issue.

Swan Hills Erosion Control - The Division, in cooperation with the Energy Resources Conservation Board, the Department of Lands and Forests, the Department of Highways and Transport, and the unit operators in the Swan Hills area, has initiated a project to control erosion and protect the watershed of the Swan Hills. The project is guided by the Swan Hills Management Steering Committee established by the Minister of the Environment order 14/72.

Reclamation Criteria for Athabasca Tar Sand Developments - In anticipation of tar sand development proposals, the Division has developed detailed land surface conservation and reclamation criteria for quarries developed in connection with the extraction of crude bitumen from tar sands. The primary objective is to ensure that the land surface will be left in a condition that will not limit future land development and use following the completion of mining operations.

Environmental Effects of Timber Harvesting - The Department of the Environment and the Department of Lands and Forests, through this Division, have initiated a study to be completed in none months to evaluate the environmental effects of timber harvesting practices. The purpose of the study is to assist the government in determining the degree to which forest resources should be developed and the controls that should be exercised over existing and future harvesting operations in the province. The area selected for the study extends from south of Grande Prairie to near the Brazeau watershed. The study is being financed primarily by the Department of the Environment, with the Department of Lands and Forests managing the study.

Oil Spills - The Division, working closely with officials of the Energy Resources Conservation Board and the Department of Lands and Forests, coordinated the development and implementation contingency plans for government action on oil spills.

U.N. Conference on the Human Environment - The Division provided a representative on a Federal-Provincial task force which is providing guidance to the preparation of An Action Plan for the Canadian Environment. The Action Plan is a direct response to the principles and resolutions adopted at the U.N. Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm from 5-16 June, 1972. The Division has been actively coordinating, on an interdepartmental basis, the preparation of Alberta's contribution to the Action Plan for the Canadian Environment.

Agricultural and Rural Development Act (ARDA) - The Division provided representation on the federal-provincial committee planning and negotiating on behalf of the province. Following the signing of the 1970-75 general agreement, considerable progress was made in finalizing and obtaining approval for individual projects authorized by the general agreement.

Canadian Advisory Committee on Remote Sensing - The Division provided Alberta's representation on this national body. The committee is under the auspices of the Canadian Centre for Remote Sensing of the Federal Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Progress in coordinating Alberta's activities and relating them to the National Remote Sensing Program as well as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Program on the Earth Resources Technology Satellite (ERTS) was favorable. The province established a remote sensing coordinator during the year, under the guidance and direction of the Conservation and Utilization Committee. During the year the coordinator has enhanced Alberta's ability to take advantage of the services of the Canadian Centre for Remote Sensing through the establishment of a direct channel of communication to the Centre. Working procedures were set up to coordinate Alberta user requests for aircraft imagery. Twelve research projects were flown during the year for various agencies. Typical projects included a study of tar sands pollution in the Athabasca River north of Fort McMurray, a regional planning study of the Fort McMurray area, and a study of highway route locations in the Rocky Mountains. The coordinator had representatives from the Centre brief interested Albertans on the acquisition of ERTS Imagery and to outline procedures for obtaining airborne remote sensing. To date, there appears to be approximately 200 professional people interested in remote sensing in the province. The coordinator has maintained contact with these individuals through a remote sensing newsletter, by forwarding technical data of interested remote sensing users, by lecturing to interested groups, and by developing a training program for Alberta users. A survey of remote sensing use and needs was completed during the year which strongly indicated the need for a Remote Sensing Coordination Centre in Alberta. A proposal to this effect was prepared.

Environment Conservation Authority - The Division continued to provide the Authority with a link to the various environment government departments and agencies. This interdepartmental liaison was carried out on matters pertaining to the Man and Resources Conference Program, the Public Advisory Committees to the Authority, and public hearings on the surface impact of mining, sulphur extraction at gas processing plants, herbicides and pesticides, the environmental effects of timber harvesting, and land use and resource development in the foothills.

Regional Planning Commission Liaison - Regional Planning Commissions continued to rely upon the Division as the contact point with other government agencies on matters pertaining to the environment, including the development of the Crowsnest Pass area, the Edmonton metropolitan growth alternatives study, and the Foothills Resource Allocation Study public hearings.

Land Surface Conservation Regulations - The Division was active in the preparation of new regulations for the protection of the land surface from unnecessary and deleterious surface disturbances. Regulated surface operations under active consideration included geophysical operations, mines, sand and gravel pits, quarries, oil field operations such as batteries and well sites, waste disposal sites, and watershed protection areas. In some instances the environmental criteria are being integrated by other agencies into their regulations.